

A "Miracle Club" That Put Other Chap First

Success of Employment Plan Under Auspices of Church Confounds Churchmen Who Said It "Couldn't Be Done"

By DR. DU BOIS H. LOUX

THE first day found churchmen on hand who for two years had been telling me that it could not be done. New York was not only the graveyard of men of provincial reputation, but the cemetery of dreamers who dream dreams.

But there was no time to think of that from the first morning. It was no time to think, that first morning, what men have thought since, that it would have been fitting to have had the great church organ strike every man to his feet with the pealing notes of the "Halleluiahs" chorus of the Messiah.

I ran up the steps of the broad platform waving a bit of paper before the throng, when at last after two years of saying so, we had proved the first morning that New York would fill any church any hour of the day, if we wished to have it so.

"If there are any carpenters here," I said in the instant silence of the throng, "you are out the moment you are in. A telephone message has come in from a department store saying that our three-line 'ad' in the morning paper was seen, and congratulating us on the service which we have opened today. It has jobs for two carpenters. Run along there at the end of the gallery to our church office through that door, and good luck to you, and God's blessing."

The carpenters were there, and the men opened up with a clapping of hands as two or three jumped eagerly for the gallery door. It showed the capacity of the unemployed throng to rejoice with the two that were made glad with the first note of the meeting.

The three-line advertisement we had inserted in a New York paper read:

Religious service nine to ten every morning, Saturday and Sunday excepted; at close of meetings will co-operate with the unemployed.

It was notice enough.

The "Two and Two Club" did the rest after that. "You fellows who haven't references," I said when the carpenters were gone, taking care that no sting should accompany the announcement, "will be sent to other organizations who are qualified to help you out. You who have references will be eligible to join an unemployment club with no expense to yourself but a bit of endeavor on your part to do a two and two piece of work which we have cut out for you. The moment you entered this church today its roof covered a perfect dynamo of possibilities. It's a good meeting that helps men to help themselves, and that will be the purpose of the open door of this church during the unemployment crisis that is upon us. Let me tell you a story."

The men listened. There were college men there, who could speak in six languages, the audience collectively boasting perhaps a score of different tongues. They repeated my text taken from the Bible at the close of the talk, and we had a word of prayer together on what we were organizing. William James, of Harvard, than whom America has produced no greater all-around man and scholar, in his "Energies of Men," gives this scientific statement of the value of prayer:

"Dr. Hyslop, of the great West Riding Asylum, in England, said last year to the British Medical Association that the best . . . agent which his practice had revealed to him, was prayer. I say this, he added (I am sorry that I must quote from memory), purely as a medical man. The exercise of prayer, in those who habitually exert it, must be regarded by us doctors as the most adequate and normal of all the pacifiers of the mind and calmers of the nerves. Relatively few medical men, I fancy, can pray. Few can carry on any living commerce with 'God.' Yet many of us are well aware of how much freer and abler our lives would be, were such important forms of energizing not sealed up by the critical atmosphere in which we have been reared. There are in every one potential forms of activity that actually are shunted out from use. Part of the imperfect vitality under which we labor can thus be easily explained. One part of our minds dams up—even damns up!—the other parts."

That is William James' word.

What Pulling Together Does

LET us see how it acted on four hundred or more men drawn together because they were out of work in the world's great metropolis.

"Fellows," I said after the prayer, "if I do it will you do it?"

"Go ahead with it, same boat," was the seafaring echo.

"Well," I said, feeling fairly rocking with the energy the collective human dynamo was raising in that church full of men, "here's the program to pull out a job for every one of you who has a will for it. I'm willing to come to this church for six hours every day with no cost to it, and no cost to you, but four hours' club work out in the city, at the close of the morning meeting. If I go out for you, will you go out two by two for one another?"

"Show us," they reacted, not being certain of what was meant by my question.

Then came the explanation of the Two and Two Club proposition.

"I want to send you out two by two today. You are to go to employers, two by two, to tell them that

Dr. Loux tells the story of an "Unemployed Club" which adopted a brand new idea that worked. The idea was that job hunters should hunt jobs for others instead of themselves. Psychologically it worked miracles. Economically it was a great success. Dr. Loux was associate pastor of the Metropolitan Temple, New York, and later transferred to Labor Temple.

you belong to a club that is composed of men who have references, but are out of work. You are not to speak about yourselves at all, unless the employers ask you, "Do you want work?" Then you are to say yes, and take the work, letting us know by telephone that you have found your job. Each unit of two men will spend four hours out, as I shall spend four hours out, searching the city for chances for men to get a hearing for a job. Every day we shall bring in the jobs offered us to our secretaries here in the church. It will be fun working thus two by two for the other fellow. It will be worth being out of a job just to get the memory of the pleasant experience of becoming workers for jobs for the fellows of the club."

They took to the idea without any further need of arguing for it. They picked out their "running mates," and got busy. Employers soon took knowledge of a new thing in the city.

The "Six Feet From" Exercise

EVERY day it came out that we had jobs that were too good for any of the men to take advantage of, no matter what education the members of the club boasted. Every day we lost some of our best workers, who joined the ranks of the "ex-unemployed." But the men, once placed, gave reasonable proof of the gratitude of human nature. They reported jobs to us from time to time, and sent their unemployed friends to the club.

There were daily "setting-up" exercises that afforded some amusement. One of these was the "six-feet-from" exercise. We soon discovered that the greatest fault of men long out of work is the fault of "crowding in" on an employer. Very good men, in their eagerness to state their case will edge up until their faces are not six inches from the face of the prospective employer. No man likes to breathe the breath of a stranger. Hence the "six-feet-from" exercises, with our motto, "Invade the area marked by the radius of six feet from the body of an employer and you say goodbye to the job you may have reason to hope he will give you."

Perhaps nine out of ten of the men found themselves in need of getting busy to correct this fault.

Another fault was politics. The man out of a job for long becomes sore at society. He feels that he has a bone to pick with industry. The tariff is at fault, or capital is at fault, or the church is at fault, or distribution is at fault. The first thing that we did in the Two and Two Club was to *taboo the grouse*. We worked together on the proposition that no man was to go around with a chip on his shoulder. Every man was to talk good cheer, his theme being the cheer-up fellows who belonged to the club and who wanted but the chance to come, tell, and afterward prove, what they could do to make life worth living for an employer.

It is really wonderful what miracles the cheerful point of view worked in the lives of these men.

The men caught the idea that they could be business doctors in some small way at least. Two and two they learned to go through the city with a smile, though often, I fear, with a hungry stomach.

Two men cannot approach a disinterested foreman with a cheerful tale of how they are looking for work for other fellows, without making a new impression on this employment official. Our disinterest, one with another, is after all only relative. How many employers who have not made a dollar of profit for a twelvemonth are still keeping the factory wheels turning for the sake of the needs and comforts of the men whom they have learned to know in their struggles to brave the wolf! Ask the men of the Two and Two Club what they discovered as they went their rounds.

But one day one of the club came to me with a story that you will never forget, once you know it. There is something so human about it that you would not want to forget if you could.

I became conscious one morning at the church of a

very determined though not displeasing face before me. "God can't do anything for me," the man said as soon as I was free to turn to him.

I looked him over. He stood in the "six feet from" posture and waited.

"Why can't God do anything for you?" I asked him. "Because I have been the superintendent of an elevator apartment building. I made an enemy of the real estate company that is in control of the property. I have lived long enough to know that even God Almighty cannot do anything for the man who has made an enemy of a New York real estate concern," he said.

"That is a very serious statement to make, is it not?" I ventured.

"I make it," he replied.

Before me on a desk lay the recommendations of two members of the club who, it chanced, were experienced as elevator men in apartment houses.

"Would you be willing to give the Almighty ten days to prove that you are wrong in your statement?" I asked, taking up the letters of the elevator men.

He hesitated for some time before he answered. "Yes, I would give Him ten days; but it is no use."

"But you will give the Lord the ten days?"

"Yes."

"Well, here on my desk, it happens are the proofs that two fellows this morning deserve employment as elevator men. They have given good service in apartment houses in the past. I am going to give you the names of three of the best real estate men in New York City. Will you call on them today in behalf of the elevator men?"

"Why, yes, certainly," he answered.

"Tell the real estate men that we have the proof of the ability of the young men. But don't say a word about yourself."

He looked sharply, almost angrily.

"Not a word about yourself—unless," I continued, "you are asked about yourself. Then you may say, but incidentally, mind you, 'Why, I happen to be a superintendent of elevator apartments, though I am not now in service.' Say it as casually as you can. Get out as soon as you have made your plea for the boys."

The next morning he was again before me at the close of my talk.

"I told you God couldn't do anything for me," he said shortly.

"You promised ten days," I said reverently. The man provoked a tremendous amount of faith in his behalf, in spite of his set teeth.

He handed me a paper.

"It was easy to get the two elevator men into situations," he explained. "Here is the order that they be sent around to the real estate office."

It went on through the week in the same fashion. The man was always there before me in the same spot at the close of the morning service. He had no more to say to me, but he was waiting through the ten-day period agreed upon.

"We Have a Job for Him"

OUR small office force required publicity of effort. We could not keep the knowledge of how other men were getting placed from the less successful applicants, and one could not but notice the flash in determined eyes, whenever other men's names were read out in evidence of their successful application for jobs.

Moreover, we were holding a daily religious meeting in which faith in God was invited.

Men were getting on their feet to tell their story, or coming to me to sound me as to whether I believed my message. Some, of course, thought it curious nonsense. What had God to do with a man's work? Was God asleep? Why didn't he wake up, if he was? Where was God, anyway?

These questions came daily, in one form or another, from the disappointed and unplaced.

But the superintendent of apartments never joined in this chorus. He had spoken his word to me in private. He was waiting out the ten-day sentence.

The week passed. On Saturday there was no service in the church. It was rest day for the workers.

There was always a crowd hanging around, though; and one of the staff of helpers stayed at the telephone Saturday mornings. In a way this was the hardest day for the men. It was just before the breaking out of the war. Tens of thousands of men were out of work, prices were high, it was considered, and there was much sickness. He was the real hero, therefore, who braved a Saturday at the church.

On Sunday afternoon I came into the city for an afternoon Bible class at the church.

Just why it was, I could not make out at first; but everybody was seemingly smiling.

I moved up to the center of the sea of chairs. A pad of paper lay on the desk. There was a written telephone message that had come in in my absence Saturday. The shock of the words was as distinct as any major impression in a man's life can be.

The message was from a real estate firm, and read:

"Send that splendid man to us who knows how to superintend elevator apartment buildings and is so interested in other men. We have a job for him. He is the kind of man that we want."